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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT TALABANI ON SUPPORT FOR MALIKI; IRAN,
AND TURKEY

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary: At a lunch on April 14, President Talabani told the Ambassador he was optimistic that broad political support for PM Maliki in the wake of Basra would hasten the return of Sunni Arab Tawafuq and secular Iraqiya blocs to government. He said that his analysis of Iran was that Tehran was seeking an accommodation with the U.S. and with Iraq because they were sensing a Shi'a backlash to their Iraq policy. Talabani said he was waiting to hear from Turkey on his proposal to establish a High Committee, but in the meantime he was pleased at signs that Turkey was willing to seek improved relations with the KRG. End Summary.

¶2. (S) Returning from the U.S. and departing shortly thereafter for Riyadh on April 14, Ambassador met at short notice with Prime Minister Maliki (septel) and had lunch with President Talabani. The Ambassador was accompanied to lunch by Special Assistant to the President Brett McGurk, PolCouns Tueller, and SA Khedery. Talabani was upbeat about relations amongst the political leaders, referring to a "Baghdad Spring" and a feeling that "psychological barriers", particularly between PM Maliki and VP Hashimi, were being lowered. According to Talabani, the PM was ready for the return to government of Tawafuq and was making significant gestures to ease the return.

¶3. (S) While declaring that "competition between them is finished", Talabani cautioned that VP Hashimi needed to understand that he could not have everything he wanted all at once. His advice to Hashimi was to take what was on offer now and then patiently work for step by step progress towards true power-sharing. For example, he said Hashimi was focused on amending the constitution. This had to be approached slowly, Talabani warned. He asked that the Ambassador reinforce this message to Hashimi. He stressed the mutually positive relationship emerging between Maliki and Hashimi. Maliki was deeply grateful for the political support Hashimi extended during the Basra campaign. Maliki had invited Hashimi to participate in planning for security operations in Mosul, addressing a long-time complaint that the Sunni Arabs were excluded from security policy.

¶4. (S) Talabani was also upbeat about prospects for a deal that would allow Iraqiya and the Fadhila Party to return to a national unity government. He wrote to Iraqiya leader Ayad Allawi and expected a reply soon. He also spoke with Fadhila spiritual guide Shaykh Yacoubi who had promised to support an appeal for Fadhila to come back to government.

¶5. (S) Replying to the question of how to apply pressure to the Sadrist Trend to come into the political process, Talabani said much of what the Sadrist Trend would do now depended on Iran. Tehran had realized that Muqtada al-Sadr could not be controlled and that the nationalist sentiments of Muqtada were ten times those of Sunni IIP leader Tariq al-Hashimi. Some in Iran even now believed Muqtada might have ties to the Syrian wing of the Ba'ath Party. Iran was

seeing that the consequence of its divisive policies in Iraq was isolation from the Iraqi Shi'a mainstream and a backlash.

What Iran now saw as desirable was an accommodation with the U.S. and Iraq both that protects long-term Iranian equities.

16. (S) Talabani said he had not yet heard back from the Turks on his proposal to establish a high level committee to address bilateral ties. However, there were positive signs of Turkish willingness to improve relations with the KRG. Ankara had asked to meet KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani in Dubai, Europe, or Baghdad. The Iraqis were asking for a Turkish envoy to come to Baghdad as soon as possible to meet with Nechirvan.

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